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Lemonade via robots: UT research project looks into responsible artificial intelligence



by: **Candy Rodriguez**



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household items.

This week, at the UT campus, two robots will roam the 40 Acres delivering free lemonade to those with a university email who order via the “Texas Botler” app. It’s part of the university’s [New Autonomous Delivery System or SMADS project](#) through [Good Systems](#).

University researchers are working to develop ethically responsible artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

“AI system is everywhere in our life whether we realize it or not,” Junfeng Jiao, an associate professor at UT School of Architecture and the chair of Good Systems who secured funding for the project. “From dating apps to facial recognition to red-light cameras, so we want to create a group system that can fairly, equitably, accessibility is used by everybody not just certain segments of society. We want the system to be transparent, protect privacy, safe to use without discrimination or inherited by bias.”

They’re also looking at the safest way to integrate the technology into the real world.

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“You now have a robot that’s running on the sidewalk right next to people, how do you do that when it’s a crowded sidewalk? How do you do it when there are people and its intentions aren’t clear? How do you do it when it’s no longer cute that there is a robot out there and it’s a spectacle to look at? Will people start to regard it as an inconvenience like the electric scooters?” asked Justin Hart, the assistant professor ×

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I believe in the next five to 10 years we will certainly see a lot more services, Diswas said.

Those services could change the way society operates.

“Rather than having large corporations dominating the landscape of delivery, it’s opening opportunities to really empower small businesses that have items they want to deliver,” said Luis Sentis, an associate professor in the aerospace engineering department.

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The lemonade project will run all week long. Jiao said the goal is to hopefully expand the technology and have service robots roaming the city in the next couple of years.

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